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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000883

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [BM](#)  
SUBJECT: BURMA: NATIONAL CONVENTION "ADJOURNS" ON SCHEDULE

REF: A. RANGOON 882  
[B.](#) RANGOON 719  
[C.](#) RANGOON 714 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: The constitutional National Convention (NC) "adjourned" (as the state press put it) on July 9th, ending an eight week session that has gone largely according to the SPDC's script. The NC will allegedly reconvene in the late Fall to continue its "deliberations." We see no reason why the NLD will be included in this next session, as it was excluded without repercussions during phase one. Likewise, we see little chance that the ethnic cease-fire groups will jeopardize their economic status quo by taking a significant stand opposing the regime's pre-scripted constitutional process. End summary.

National Convention: That's A Wrap

[¶2.](#) (SBU) The National Constitutional Convention (NC) adjourned for a recess on July 9th following an eight week run at a site 20 miles north of Rangoon. The NC, which is step one of Prime Minister Khin Nyunt's seven-step "Road Map to Democracy," brought together around 1,000 delegates, divided into nine groups, but did not include the National League for Democracy (NLD) or any of the ethnically-based opposition parties. The state-controlled "New Light of Myanmar" newspaper had extensive coverage of the NC and the "adjournment," including a spread on July 12th showing SPDC Secretary Two Lt. Gen. Thein Sein seeing off the delegates at

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3:45 am.

[¶3.](#) (SBU) This first eight weeks of the NC dealt with the guidelines for drafting the legislative aspects of the new constitution, though there was little evidence of any genuine debate. Guidelines for drafting the judicial and executive portions of the constitution await the next session of the NC. There was no word on when, or if, the role of the military in the new constitution would be discussed. According to Secretary Two, and Chairman of the National Convention Convening Committee (NCCC), the NC will reconvene when the rice harvest is in and the weather is "fine and pleasant." By anyone's count, this means no sooner than November.

[¶4.](#) (SBU) During the recess, the NC Working Committee officials (all good party men) will draft the final guidelines for the legislative portion of the constitution. Ostensibly they will take into consideration the proposals submitted by the nine groups of delegates. However, thus far, the SPDC and its NC puppets have shown little interest in allowing any outside input at all on substantive matters already covered in the regime's "104 principles" left over from the NC's last session, which collapsed in 1996.

Comment: All Aboard!

[¶5.](#) (C) The National Convention, and by extension the whole "Road Map," have turned out to be a complete railroading. The SPDC has completed the first phase smoothly with no substantive debate and without NLD interference. The delegate group of "specially invited" ethnic cease-fire groups (CFGs) was the only group of the nine who had anything new to say during the eight-week NC session (ref B), but the CFGs appear to have struck out thus far in their efforts to squeeze more states' rights out of the pre-cooked guidelines. We are now waiting to see if the CFGs make good on their previous, frustrated threats (to us, not to the GOB) to refuse to return to the NC when it is next convened (ref B). We are skeptical, though, as the CFGs hold very few cards and may be reluctant to jeopardize their current economically beneficial arrangements with the SPDC over political issues the CFGs understand poorly. End comment.  
Martinez